

- **Thank you, Chairman Heise, for hearing testimony this morning on House Bill 4536**, the wrongful incarceration compensation bill. Here with me is Senator Steve Bieda who has led the legislative effort on this legislation for many years now and who has the Senate version of this bill. I'd also like to thank Representatives Howrylak and Hovey-Wright for cosponsoring this bipartisan bill.
- **I wanted to take a minute to share why I support this issue.** About eight years ago I began working on an effort related to ensuring adequate legal representation for those accused of crimes. While working for this coalition, I met many individuals who had been wrongfully incarcerated, and a few of them like Ken Wyniemko and Julie Baumer are here today.
- As I talked with some of the exonerees I met, or family members whose loved ones had been wrongfully incarcerated, I not only learned about some of the things that went wrong in their court cases but also learned about the incredible struggles that they faced both in prison and upon their release from prison.
- I remember talking with **Ruth Lloyd Harlin**, sister of Eddie Joe Lloyd, who was Michigan's first DNA exoneree. He developed serious medical issues while serving 17 years in prison for a rape and murder he did not commit, and passed away just two years after his release. **What could we as a state have done to better serve Eddie Joe Lloyd?**
- There have been **54 exonerations** in Michigan since 1989. Thirty states and the federal government compensate the wrongfully convicted.
- This bill would allow an individual who was convicted and imprisoned for a crime he/she did not commit to receive damages for each year of wrongful incarceration. If an exoneree takes the compensation offered in this bill they give up their right to legal action against the state in return for immediate financial assistance.
- **I believe that it is our responsibility** to make sure that we compensate those who have been wrongfully incarcerated. We must do all that we can to help exonerees get back on their feet once they return to their communities. Whether it be housing, jobs, transportation, or medical or mental health care, there are significant costs that come with adjusting

back into society. Unlike parolees, exonerees are given no services to help with this.

- Added on top of that is the element of knowing that one spent, in some cases, many years for a crime that one did not commit. I believe when an individual is proven innocent, after years of wrongful incarceration, the least they should expect is a state that wants to help make it right.
- Now I'll turn it over to Senator Bieda for additional comments. He has introduced and re-introduced this legislation in the house and senate for several sessions in a row now and I am grateful for his leadership on this issue!